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Pittsburgh Post-Gazette

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Mayor signs controversial law on exotic animals

Zoo, Shrine Circus oppose new constraints

By Julian Routh
Pittsburgh Post-Gazette

Mayor Bill Peduto signed a hotly contested bill into law late Thursday that makes it illegal to use a whip, electric prod or elephant hook on any wild or exotic animal in Pittsburgh.

The bill, which outlaws the use of any instrument "capable of inflicting pain, intimidating or threatening pain for the purpose of training or controlling" wild and exotic animals, has been heavily opposed by the Pittsburgh Zoo & PPG Aquarium and Syria Shrine, which runs the annual Shrine Circus at PPG Paints Arena.

Shrine Circus officials have publicly condemned the bill for being too broad and putting the circus through needless regulations, while zoo officials have argued that the legislation would prevent the zoo from safely using tools that protect caretakers, the animals and the public.

Violators can face a fine as high as $1,000 and up to 30 days in jail.

Though the impact the bill will have on the 68-year-old fundraising circus is to be determined, Shrine Circus chairman Paul Leavy said the circus has contracts in place through September 2018 with its performers and PPG Paints Arena and is "awaiting a decision on whether we're a 'go' or not."

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SWEET FRIENDS

Darrell Sapp/Post-Gazette

Waffles goes nose to nose with Marilyn Adams of Wexford after the dog arrived from Greene County on Friday. Animal Friends held its 21st annual New Year's Rescue in Ohio Township. The animals got dessert-themed names. **Story, Page B-1** .

President takes aim at Amazon shipping business

His tweet refers to 'internet tax' failures

By Joseph Pisani
Associated Press

NEW YORK — President Donald Trump returned to a favorite target Friday, saying that Amazon.com should be charged more by the U.S. Postal Service for the packages it sends around the world.

Amazon has been a consistent recipient of Mr. Trump's ire. He has accused the company of failing to pay "internet taxes," though it's never been made clear by the White House what the president means by that.

In a tweet Friday, Mr. Trump said Amazon should be charged "MUCH MORE" by the post office because it's "losing many billions of dollars a year" while it makes "Amazon richer."

Amazon lives and dies by shipping, and an increase in the rates it pays could certainly do some damage. Amazon sends packages via the post office, FedEx, UPS and other services.

In the seconds after the tweet, shares of Amazon, which had been trading higher before the opening bell, began to fade and went into negative territory. The stock closed down more than 1 percent Friday. Broader markets also

SEE **TRUMP**, PAGE A-4

INSIDE

• Trump administration rescinds rules for oil and gas drilling.
• Trump fires remaining members of HIV/AIDS council.
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State urges residents to begin preparing documents for REAL ID card

By Ed Blazina
Pittsburgh Post-Gazette

Federally mandated REAL ID cards won't be available in Pennsylvania for another 15 months, but the state Department of Transportation is encouraging residents to begin preparing now.

That's because it could take six months or more to gather documents needed to obtain the card.

They include an original or certified copy of a birth certificate or passport; a Social Security card; proof of all legal name changes such as a marriage license or family court order; and two proofs of a current address such as utility bills or bank statements less than 90 days old.

Under the program, not everyone is required to obtain a REAL ID card. The state expects about 25 percent of the 10.7 million people with driver's licenses or ID cards to want REAL ID.

About 35 percent of residents, those who obtained their original driver's license or ID card after September 2003, shouldn't have to gather documentation again because the state should still have the

SEE **ID**, PAGE A-5

NYC officials say child sparked deadly fire by playing with stove

By Jennifer Peltz and David Jeans
Associated Press

NEW YORK — A preschooler toying with the burners on his mother's stove accidentally sparked New York City's deadliest fire in decades, an inferno that quickly overtook an apartment building and blocked the main escape route, the fire commissioner said Friday.

A dozen people died and four others were fighting for their lives a day after the flames broke out in the century-old building near the Bronx Zoo.

The 3-year-old-boy, his mother and another child were able to flee their first-floor apartment. But they left the apartment door open behind them, and it acted like a chimney that drew smoke and flames into a stairwell. From there, the fire spread throughout the five-story building, authorities said.

The city housing department said investigators would look into why the door did not close automatically, though Mayor Bill de Blasio said there was "nothing problematic about the building that contributed to this tragedy."

At least 20 people scrambled out via fire escapes on a bitterly cold night, but others could not.

"People had very little time to react," Fire Commissioner Daniel Nigro said. Firefighters arrived in just over three minutes and saved some people, but "this loss is unprecedented."

Julio Cortez/Associated Press

Nilda Guerrero, a friend of the superintendent of an apartment building where a dozen people died Friday in the Bronx borough of New York, is overcome with emotion after trying to visit the building.

Fernando Batiz said his 56-year-old sister, Maria Batiz, and her 8-month-old granddaughter also died, though the baby's mother survived.

"The smoke, I guess, overcame her. Everything happened so quick," Mr. Batiz said. He described his sister, a home care attendant, as a selfless person who helped him when he was homeless.

"I don't know what to think. I'm still in shock," he said.

One family lost four members: Karen Stewart-Francis, her daughters, 2-year-old Kiley Francis and 7-year-old Kelly Francis, and their cousin, 19-year-old Shawntay Young, relatives said. Ms. Stewart-Francis' husband, Holt Francis, was hospitalized, the family said.

"I don't know what to do, and I don't know how to feel," Ms. Stewart-Francis' mother, Ambrozia Stewart, told The New

SEE **BRONX**, PAGE A-2

Moon trucker recounts miracle of surviving crash in Ohio

By Jennifer Feehan
Block News Alliance

When the opportunity presents itself, Diana Dixon shares her story with people she meets on the road.

"Usually they'll ask me why I'm a truck driver or how long I've been a truck driver, and I'll say I've been a truck driver a while, but I took a little break," the Moon resident said.

When they ask why, she tells them in a sentence: "I stopped to help at an accident, and the pickup I went to go help got hit by a semi, and I jumped off of a 30-foot bridge."

Ms. Dixon, who turned 55 on Tuesday, wants people to believe in miracles.

She is one.

She not only survived the leap from that bridge six years ago on Interstate 475 in suburban Toledo, Ohio, she learned to walk again after sustaining 24 fractures to her pelvis, five broken ribs, a neck fracture, a punctured lung, and a lacerated bladder.

To top things off, earlier this year she climbed into an 18-wheeler and restarted her truck-

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Weather
Very cold with snow.
Daytime high, 23;
tonight's low, 11.
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